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USDA

Food Stamp PROGRAM





What is the Food Stamp Program?

Food stamps help single people and families with little or no income to buy food.

How do I get food stamps?

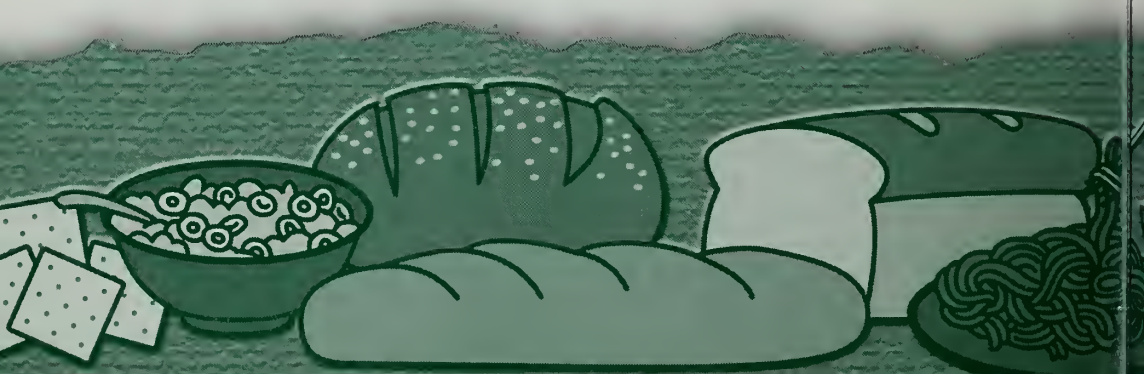
Look in the government section (blue pages) of your phone book. You can find food stamps under “social services department” or “welfare department.”

Call the food stamp office to set up a meeting with a worker. Ask what papers you need to bring. The worker will need to see your pay stubs, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, child- or elder-care bills, and child-support orders (the court order and canceled checks).

At the food stamp office you will talk with a worker, answer some questions, and sign some papers. If you can't go to the food stamp office, you may send a relative or a friend to talk with the worker. Or you may be able to talk with a worker on the phone.

Can I get food stamps just for myself if I live with my family or with others?

People who live together and buy food and prepare meals together are grouped as a “household.” Husbands and wives and most children under age 22 must be one household.



Will I have to get a social security number?

Yes, you must have or will have to get a social security number for each household member.

Can legal noncitizens get food stamps?

You might be able to get food stamps. Talk with a food stamp worker about this. Even if you can't get food stamps, family members born in this country can. Getting food stamps won't hurt you if you want to become a citizen.

Can I get help if I'm not working?

If you're able to work, you must look for work, take a job offer, or go to training.

How many assets can we have?

Households with a member age 60 or older may have up to \$3,000 in countable assets. Other households may have up to \$2,000.

We don't count the assets of people who are receiving State cash assistance (TANF) or Federal supplemental security income (SSI). We don't count your home and up to \$4,650 of the fair market value of one car. We don't count a vehicle that you need to carry a physically disabled household member.

How much income can we have?

We count most types of income. *Gross* income means income before any deductions. *Net* income means gross income minus allowable deductions.



SSI and TANF households are already eligible. Households without an elderly or disabled member must meet both a gross and net income test. Households with an elderly or disabled member only have to meet a net income test.

For October 1, 2000, through September 30, 2001, the income limits follow:

People in Household	Gross Income*	Net Income*
1	\$ 905	\$ 696
2	1,219	938
3	1,533	1,180
4	1,848	1,421
5	2,162	1,663
6	2,476	1,905
7	2,790	2,146

What are the allowable deductions?

- 20 percent of earned income;
- a standard deduction of \$134*;
- medical expenses over \$35 a month for elderly or disabled members;
- certain dependent-care costs when needed for training, education, or work, but not more than \$200 for each child under age 2 and not more than \$175 for each other dependent;
- legally owed child support; and
- a percentage of shelter costs.

**Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.*



If my household is eligible, how much will we get?

For October 1, 2000, through September 30, 2001, the table below shows the most you could get if you have no income. As your income goes up, the amount of food stamps you will get goes down.

People in Household	Maximum Monthly Allotment*
1	\$ 130
2	238
3	341
4	434
5	515
6	618
7	683

**Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.*



Are food stamps cash?

No. Food stamps are paper coupons that you can use only for food. In some areas, food stamp benefits come on a plastic card that you use just like a bank card. Most food stores take food stamps.

What if I have more questions?

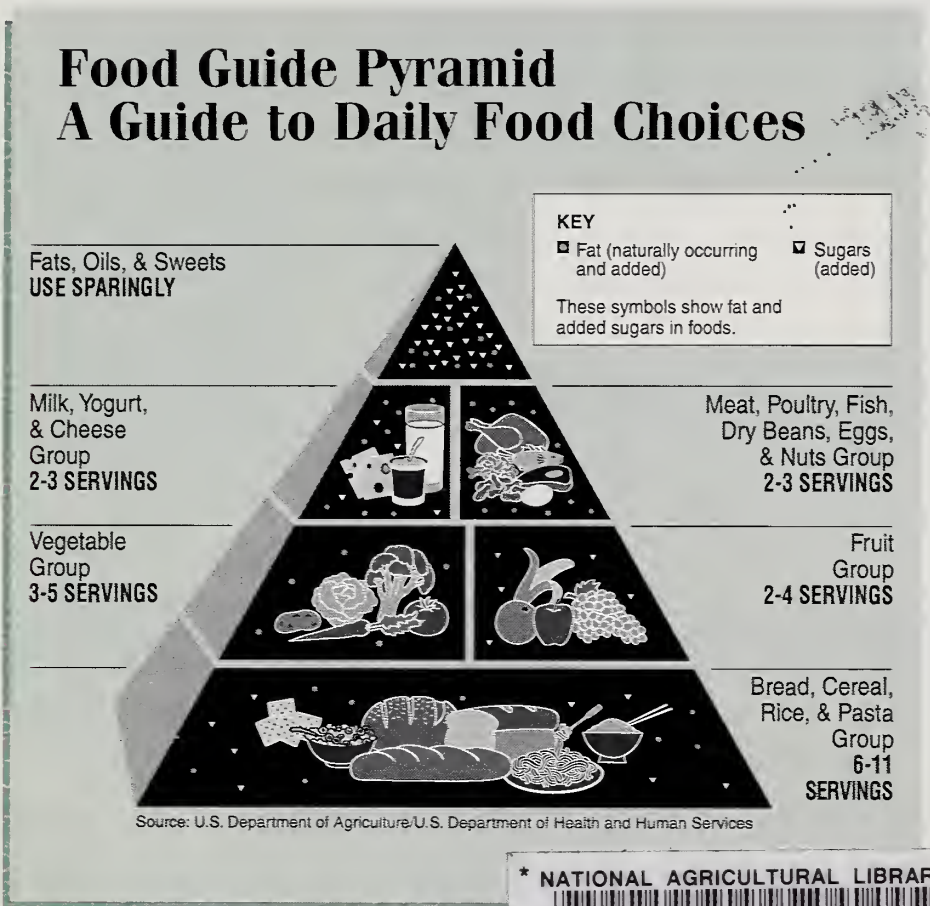
You should call your local food stamp office. Our toll-free number, 1-800-221-5689, can direct you to your State's toll-free number.

For more information about Food and Nutrition Service programs, please visit our web site at www.fns.usda.gov



Choose foods to promote a healthy future at every stage of life.

- Food stamps expand your ability to eat a variety of foods.
- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.



- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day – at least 30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children.
- Choose a variety of grains (especially whole grains), fruits, and vegetables daily.



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